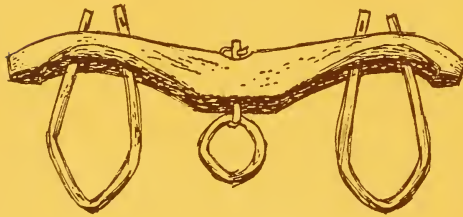


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National Union Convention
of 1864 and Why Lincoln
was not nominated by ac-
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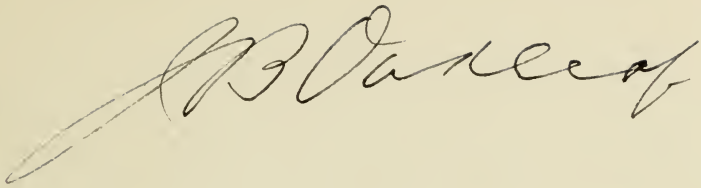


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National Union Convention of
1864 and Why Lincoln
was not Nominated
by Acclamation






National Union Convention of
1864 and Why Lincoln
was not Nominated
by Acclamation



BY
JOSEPH BENJAMIN OAKLEAF
of the Illinois Bar

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When the "Wigwam" Convention of 1860 adjourned there was a determined army of men who marched out with a firm conviction that victory would be theirs when the smoke of battle should clear away, and they were not disappointed.

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The years passed and the time for calling another convention was approaching. The Republican Party had been in existence for nearly eight years and the result of its policy had been widespread, but the times had changed. The conditions were such that politics, so far as party name was concerned, must be laid aside and the union of all patriots was a thing desired in order to continue the policies promulgated at Chicago in 1860. Someone must take the lead and it fell to the lot of the Republican National Committee to solve the vexed problem, which they did by issuing a call on Febru-

ary 22nd, 1864, under the name of the "Union National Executive Committee" for the convening of the "National Union Convention" at Baltimore on Tuesday, June 7th, 1864, at 12 o'clock noon. The call was to "All qualified voters who desire an unconditional maintenance of the Union, the supremacy of the Constitution and the complete suppression of the existing rebellion, with the cause thereof, by vigorous war, and all efficient means, to send delegates * * *." The call was signed by the members of the National Republican Committee, with Edwin D. Morgan, chairman.

The Convention met in the Front Street Theater which was crowded to the doors with delegates, visitors and distinguished guests. Upon calling the Convention to order, Mr. Morgan made a short address. He referred to the nomination of Fremont eight years before and to Lincoln four years prior, but the word "Republican" was not mentioned, nor was "Republican Convention" referred to by any of the speakers.

Robert J. Breckinridge, of Kentucky, was named as temporary chairman and he delivered a strong union speech, and the wisdom of the National Committee in eliminating the word "Republican" was apparent when he said: "As a Union Party I will follow you to the ends of the earth and to the gates of death, but as an Abolition Party, as a Republican Party, as a Whig Party, as a Democratic Party, as an American Party, I will not follow you one foot."

Simon Cameron, who had been a member of Lincoln's cabinet, was a delegate to the Convention and very prominent during all the proceedings and was on his feet a greater portion of the time the first day of the Convention, and a question scarcely arose upon which he did not have something to say, and he was seeking to direct affairs.

All the delegates seemed to be at sea as to how to proceed with the organization of the Convention. Much of the work was

very informal for all were for Lincoln except one set of delegates from Missouri. (Missouri sent contesting delegates; one set was elected by the Radical Union Convention and the other by the Unconditional Union Party.) The Credential Committee decided in favor of the Radicals (anti-Lincoln) and they were seated. It was the wish of Lincoln that the Radicals should be seated for he did not want it said that only those favorable to him were given any consideration, and subsequently it was manifest that Lincoln acted wisely. The committee on permanent organization, at the evening session of the first day, named William Dennison, of Ohio, as President of the Convention. There was much discussion whether or not delegates from seceding states should be seated, and, after some wrangling, they were admitted.

On the second day of the Convention, after the reading of the report of the Committee on Resolutions, of which committee Henry J. Raymond, of New York, was chairman, Mr. Delano, of Ohio, moved that the

Convention proceed to the nomination of President and Vice President of the United States. Mr. Cameron came forward with a substitute as follows: "That Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, be declared the choice of the Union Party for President and Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine, be the candidate for Vice President of the same party." The substitute was laid on the table and before the motion to proceed with the nominations was put, Cook, of Illinois, said: "I move that Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, be declared the choice of this Convention." After a great deal of bantering pro and con, and a variety of motions were made, all tending towards the same end, but there was a great deal of confusion! Mr. Raymond realized that things were in quite a tangle, and in a well directed speech, brought order out of chaos. He said, among other things, "It is very well known that attempts have been made, although I believe without success, to convey the impression that the nomination of Abraham Lincoln is to be rushed through this Convention by some demonstration that

will not allow the exercise of individual opinion." The Convention saw the logic of his reasoning and his conservative speech was received with a great deal of applause. The name of Abraham Lincoln was then placed in nomination by Mr. Cook, of Illinois, and no other nomination being presented, the roll of states was called and Lincoln received 484 votes and Ulysses S. Grant 22, which 22 votes were cast by Missouri. The Missouri delegates had not taken a prominent part in the Convention for they went there with their hands tied and if they had not been instructed to cast their votes for Ulysses S. Grant they would have voted for Lincoln. When Missouri was called Mr. Hume, of Missouri, arose, and, after consent had been given him to speak, said: "It is a matter of much regret that we now differ from the Convention which has been so kind to the Radicals of Missouri, but we came here instructed. We represent those who are behind us at home and we recognize the right of instruction, and intend to obey our instructions; in doing so we declare

emphatically that we are with the Union Party of this Nation, and we intend to fight the battle through with it, and assist in carrying its banner to victory in the end, and we will support your nominees, be they whom they may." He then read the resolution adopted by the Missouri Radicals at their convention, and said: "In the spirit of that resolution I cast the 22 votes of Missouri for the man who stands at the head of the fighting Radicals of the Nation, Ulysses S. Grant."

At the close of the call of the States Mr. Lincoln had 484 votes, Grant 22 votes, and Mr. Hume, of Missouri, moved to make the nomination of Lincoln unanimous but the convention insisted that he must change his vote, which he said he could not do, and the chair announced the result. Mr. Hume again attempted to make the nomination of Mr. Lincoln unanimous but he was met with the cry "Change the vote" and he then said: "I am authorized now to change the vote of Missouri to Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois,"

and the secretaries then announced that the vote was unanimous for Abraham Lincoln.

It was in Baltimore where it was reported that a plot had been framed to assassinate Lincoln on his way to Washington, and three years later the Convention met there to renominate Lincoln. The delegates and guests of the Convention were treated with great respect and no anti-Lincoln demonstration was in evidence, but it must have been a surprise to many to find that a great number of those who took such a prominent part in the Chicago convention were absent. Not a member of Lincoln's cabinet was there. (If there he was seen but not heard.) A great number of the leaders of the 1860 Convention were absent. Evarts, Greeley and Weed, of New York, were missing. Giddings, of Ohio, was absent, and so were Judd and Davis, of Illinois. But the Convention was not a convention of politicians. It was a convention of patriotic men of all parties who were determined that Abraham Lincoln should

succeed himself, and if Lincoln had not interferred, the delegates from Missouri who were for him would have been seated and then the roll of states would not have been called and he would have been nominated by acclamation. Both sets of delegates from Missouri were satisfied with the final result of the Convention, and thus passed into history another convention which played so important a part in the history of our country.

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NATIONAL UNION CONVENTION OF 1864 MOLINE



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